

Bio-Galtieri

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

CONFIDENTIAL*Memorandum*

TO : Political Files
Amembassy Buenos Aires

FROM : POL - Townsend B. Friedman

SUBJECT: Viola's Future

DATE: December 2, 1981

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Two conversations today are worthy of note.

An Argentine source who I believe is an intimate friend of Minister Liendo told me that Liendo told him earlier this week that:

- 1) Both ex-President Videla and General Galtieri asked Viola to resign. On both occasions Viola refused.
- 2) That the economic decisions taken by the government over the weekend were not cleared with the Junta beforehand.
- 3) That Viola is going to return to the presidency.

My source also stated that several weeks ago Liendo offered Galtieri his resignation but Galtieri did not accept it. Liendo expects to stay on as Minister of the Interior and will not accept any other military commands. Viola and Liendo have support among the colonels. In a test with Galtieri, Liendo and Viola can count on the support of Generals Villareal, Bussi and Martinez, among others (the list sounded like the rumored list of generals that Galtieri reputedly had slated for retirement before Viola's illness). My source confirmed that Bussi and Liendo are intimate friends. The source added too that Liendo has maintained to him that he and Viola have considerable support in the Navy. Liendo noted that many in the Navy would not be happy with the idea of Galtieri taking over the presidency and staying on as Army CINC.

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The source praised the economic measures that Liendo has taken. He added that Liendo is a man with considerable political support -- especially among organized labor which remembers favorably his period as Labor Minister. He noted that the GOA was now preparing a 30% wage increase to build more support.

I also met today with presidential adviser Romero Feris. Feris is at the outer edge of the President's inner circle, a position he admits to indirectly. Feris said:

- 1) The President would be returning to the presidency, perhaps as early as next week. While I was in Feris' office he spoke to Col. Torres who, he told me, stated that the President is much improved. According to Feris, the President is now receiving a limited number of visitors and is being kept fully informed about what is happening. Earlier in his illness he was shut off from all news.
- 2) Galtieri will not try to force the President to resign if the President does not want to. Feris made this estimate on the basis of secondhand accounts of what ex-President Videla reportedly told a friend. Feris added that any such attempt by Galtieri would plunge this country into a political quagmire -- "We would become like Bolivia, changing presidents every six months." (The Bolivian image is often used these days by those who oppose ousting the President against his will.)
- 3) Feris said he did not know if the economic measures were approved by the Junta before they were announced. But he said they were absolutely necessary for a government which has become almost without political support.
- 4) The President has been advised by some to go to the U.S. but he has refused. Feris said the political implications of such travel were too serious. Moreover, he said, it would reflect badly on Argentine medicine.

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